



# Employer Answers IN THE WORKPLACE Flexible Workplace? Employers and Employees Win

Jenna Reed  
Director, Human Resource Development Services  
Cascade Employers Association

*As part of SEDCOR's alliance with Cascade Employers Association, this feature appears periodically in the Enterprise. Cascade provides employment knowledge and support in the areas of human resource management, employment law compliance, training, pay information, safety and employee benefits.*

Let's face it; the dynamics of the workplace are changing rapidly. People are worried about the economy and fuel prices are rising at a rapid rate. All of this change has employers and employees asking, "What are my options?" Balancing your business needs and the needs of your employees can be a puzzle. What works for one organization may not work for another. Finding what works for your particular organization and workforce is key to success. One thing that seems to be emerging is the need for flexibility. Here is what some employers are choosing:

**1. Telecommuting.** The advantages include increased productivity and employee morale, potentially reduced overhead expenses, maximizing employee work time, increased retention, better results in recruiting, and it's environmentally friendly. This isn't an option for everyone and not every position lends itself well to telecommuting. Transitioning traditional positions to telecommuting positions takes time and analysis. Keys to success include choosing positions which have specific performance measures, establishing clear guidelines and ground rules, providing regular feedback and evaluation, utilizing a variety of communication tools, and keeping remote employees involved with the organization.

**2. Other Flexible Work Arrangements.** This gives employees the ability to flex their hours outside of the traditional work hours. Some organizations are moving to compressed workweeks such as working four, ten hour days. Other options include job sharing, job rotations, and part-time employment.

**3. Paid Time Off.** A paid time off (PTO) program moves from the traditional separate vacation and sick banks, and pools employee time off into one bank of time which the employee can use how they want. If the employee is never sick, the entire bank can be used for the employee's vacation. If the employee gets sick more frequently, that is less time for their other needs, such as vacation. Cascade's recent Policy and Benefits survey indicated 37% of organizations offer a PTO bank – an 18% increase from the previous survey. Advantages of PTO include reduced unscheduled absences and related expenses, increased productivity and employee morale, and it can be used as an effective recruiting tool.

**4. Phased Retirement.** A growing number of the workforce is getting closer to retirement with not enough people out there to fill the positions. Fortunately, employers are finding that many getting close to retirement want to continue working in some capacity. The good news is that employers have an opportunity to keep these workers involved and can take advantage of their experience and knowledge and hopefully provide them with an opportunity to pass along that knowledge. The difficulty can be in creating the flexibility

many of these workers seek. Options include reducing the number of hours the employee works over time, offering mentoring opportunities, job sharing, and part-time work.

**5. Variable Pay.** This type of pay program provides employees an incentive that is based on performance of the team, individual, or a combination of both. The advantages include employees focus more on their personal and company performance which typically results in increased productivity and profitability. When employees start to see how their position can impact the overall performance of the company, employees become even more motivated by the challenge and the rewards.

**6. Cash Alternatives for Opting Out of Group Insurance.** A growing number of employers are responding to employees who opt out of their health benefits by providing a cash option. Typically, employers require the employee to show proof that they have other insurance coverage and only a certain percentage of the employer's contribution is paid out. The justification may be that if the employee is covered under another plan, their spouse or significant other may have to pay a portion out of their pocket for dependent coverage. The cash provided by their employer can be used for that out of pocket expense.

**7. Gas Reimbursement.** Some options to help include telecommuting and alternative work schedules, reimbursing employees who live above the average commute of employees, offering public transportation options, encouraging car pooling, using gas gift cards as rewards, and in some cases increasing pay.

If everything keeps going as expected, flexibility in the workplace is going to be a necessity. The good news is that flexibility comes in many forms and is great for employers and employees.

Call 503-585-4320 or visit [www.cascadeemployers.com](http://www.cascadeemployers.com)

## The Great Employers Conference

Bring your team • build your team • succeed



The region's premier workforce management conference returns, bringing you a lineup of outstanding session leaders and a great setting for you and your management team to learn, share, and connect with other Northwest employers. This one-day conference features real-life case studies and successes in integrating HR programs with business strategies.

September 25, 2008 • Salem Conference Center

Registration & Details at:

[TheGreatEmployersConference.com](http://TheGreatEmployersConference.com)

**SIGN UP NOW**  
To Save Your Seats

In partnership with

